

# Champion Academy deserves support

By: Rochester Business Journal Staff July 12, 2018

---

Roland Williams knows how hard it is to grow up poor in Rochester and find success.

The former National Football League tight end and East High School graduate no longer lives in Rochester, but he still makes it a priority to give back to the Rochester community by working to help teens in poverty achieve success.

Williams' Champion Academy kicked off its fourth year this week at East High. The program, which is free for students in grades 7-12 who are in critical need of extreme mentorship, is a two-week life camp focused on five tenets: ultimate truth, unbreakable belief, conscious courage, intentional teamwork and passionate persuasion.

The program gets results, helping students improve their grade-point average, financial literacy skills, social etiquette fundamentals and relationships with peers and adults outside of family. The program also encourages community service.

"If we change how you think, if we change how you speak, then we will change your actions," Williams said. "The results have been tops in the country when working with this demographic."

But while the program works, it is not cheap. Williams said it costs about \$3,500 to underwrite a student for the year. With 340 participants this year, that's a cost of nearly \$1.2 million.

The program received a \$1 million grant from the William and Mildred Levine Foundation last fall and \$400,000 from the Polisseni Foundation, but continuing the program's work will require additional support.

Companies in the Rochester community should help Champion Academy if they can.

Improving the outcomes of poor Rochester students is crucial not just for the students themselves—which would be reason enough—but for the community at large.

If these students are able to improve their outlook and their chances of finding success personally, they can contribute to reducing the scourge of poverty in Rochester.

And making strides toward reducing poverty in Rochester would help every individual and business in this community.